



Why Jeffrey Epstein's sex crime arrest is sparking calls for Trump Labor Secretary Acosta to resign

Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta speaks on calls for resig...



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WASHINGTON – Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta is [facing calls for his resignation](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/07/09/pelosi-alexander-acosta-must-resign-over-jeffrey-epstein-plea-deal/1680730001/) following the arrest of Jeffrey Epstein on federal sex trafficking charges because of a 2007 lenient plea deal Acosta negotiated as a U.S. attorney in Miami with the former hedge fund manager over similar charges.

Acosta was confirmed in 2017 despite concerns about the non-prosecution agreement in which Epstein pleaded guilty to two state charges of soliciting underage girls. He served 13 months in jail for that conviction when a conviction on the federal charges he was potentially facing could have left him in prison for life.

Since his confirmation, the [Miami Herald has published a lengthy investigation](https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/article220097825.html) into Acosta's role in the plea agreement and a federal judge has ruled that Acosta and his team [violated the Crime Victims Rights Act](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/02/22/judge-slams-labor-secretary-acostas-role-2008-sex-case-plea-deal/2949649002/) by concealing the plea agreement from Epstein's victims.

Acosta has said that he acted properly and defended the plea deal, arguing in April that without it, Epstein ["was going to get off"](https://www.c-span.org/video/?459450-1/labor-secretary-acosta-testifies-fiscal-year-2020-budget-request&start=6699) and would have escaped conviction entirely. On Tuesday, he called Epstein's crimes "horrific" and said he "was pleased" that New York prosecutors were bringing a new case against him.



Secretary Acosta @SecretaryAcosta · Jul 9, 2019

Replying to @SecretaryAcosta

With the evidence available more than a decade ago, federal prosecutors insisted that Epstein go to jail, register as a sex offender and put the world on notice that he was a sexual predator.



Secretary Acosta

@SecretaryAcosta

Now that new evidence and additional testimony is available, the NY prosecution offers an important opportunity to more fully bring him to justice.

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Now that new evidence and additional testimony is available, the NY prosecution offers an important opportunity to more fully bring him to justice.

— Secretary Acosta (@SecretaryAcosta) July 9, 2019

https://twitter.com/SecretaryAcosta/status/1148618148490481664?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Here's what we know:

Epstein served 13 months, much of it from his office

Epstein served 13 months in county jail, had to register as a sex offender and pay restitution to his victims. Epstein's alleged co-conspirators were granted immunity.

But a federal conviction of sex trafficking a minor age 14 or older carries a minimum sentence of 10 years and a maximum sentence of life in prison. Such charges were laid out in an 82-page memo detailing federal prosecutors' findings and a 53-page indictment they compiled.

According to the Miami Herald, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's department granted Epstein work release privileges that allowed him to serve his sentence in his office for 12 hours a day for six days a week. And the time he was in a cell was spent in a private wing of the jail with his own security detail, the newspaper reported.

Acosta said during a House Appropriations subcommittee hearing in April that he understood "why folks are upset" about Epstein's work release but said that was determined by Florida law because Epstein had pleaded to state charges and it was "not a federal decision."

A judge said Acosta's team misled the victims

In February, U.S. District Court Judge Kenneth Marra ruled that Acosta, then the top federal prosecutor in Miami, had violated federal law by concealing the non-prosecution agreement from Epstein's victims.

Marra said it was "particularly problematic" that prosecutors decided to "conceal the existence" of the agreement and to "mislead the victims to believe that federal prosecution was still a possibility" (<https://www.scribd.com/document/400264793/Jane-Doe-1-and-Jane-Doe-2-vs-United-States>). And they told the victims to "have patience relative to an investigation about which it had already bound itself not to prosecute."

There was a Justice Department probe into the plea deal

After the Miami Herald investigation ran, Democratic lawmakers called for an investigation into Acosta's handling of the case.

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., joined that call for an inquiry, and in February the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility launched an investigation (https://www.sasse.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/1e5e07ee-0138-4441-9e61-b6ec7037c4d5/-untitled-.pdf), into potential "professional misconduct" in Epstein's plea deal.

On Tuesday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., called for the results of the Justice Department's investigation into the deal to be made public and for Senate hearings into the matter. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who heads the Senate Judiciary Committee, told reporters he was open to such hearings.

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"If this plea deal doesn't withstand scrutiny, then it would be the job of the Judiciary Committee to find out how it got off the rails," he said, according to The Hill.

Trump is standing by Acosta – for now

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Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., have called for Acosta's resignation, as have several Democratic presidential candidates. But on Tuesday, Trump defended Acosta, calling him "an excellent secretary of labor."

"I feel very badly actually for Secretary Acosta because I've known him as being somebody that works so hard and has done such a good job," Trump told reporters. "I feel very badly about that whole situation. But we're going to be looking at that and looking at it very closely."

He said he'll look "very carefully" at the plea deal, which he said was "a long time ago" and was a decision made "by a lot of people" in addition to Acosta.

Contributing: Michael Collins

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